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SUBJECT: NGO RE-REGISTRATION UPDATE: NDI, IRI APPROVED

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Russell.
Reasons 1.4 (b and d).

¶1. (U) The Federal Registration Service (FRS) informed NDI and IRI on October 20 that they had been re-registered. IRI has already been added to the list of approved organizations on the FRS website. Both were told to pick up their documents on October 23. Amid heightened international and Russian press coverage, much of which emphasized the suspension of NGO programs, the registration service announced October 20 that 113 organizations have been approved, 88 are under consideration, and 20 had applications that were returned for revision. According to the FRS website, 59 of those registered are U.S.-based NGOs.

¶2. (SBU) Of the 29 NGOs USAID is tracking, eight have been registered, 20 submitted applications by the October 18 deadline and are awaiting FRS' decision, and one did not submit before the deadline. The four PRM-funded NGOS providing humanitarian aid in the North Caucasus, which are included in USAID's tracking, have all submitted their documents and are waiting for decisions. Separately, 33 of about 49 U.S. adoption agencies have been registered.

¶3. (SBU) Other foreign NGOs are also receiving registration approvals. Significantly, the largest humanitarian aid organization in the North Caucasus, the Danish Refugee Council, was approved on October 19. A contact at the German Embassy said that four of six foundations funded by the German Government had been re-registered, and she did not expect difficulties with the other two, which are political foundations.

¶4. (SBU) Most NGOs have suspended their operations in the interim, either giving staff time off or bringing in only essential personnel to perform administrative tasks. An attorney working with several NGOs told us she was cautiously optimistic that the remaining NGOs would be re-registered.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The registration of NDI, a lightning rod for GOR suspicions, sends a strong positive signal that the registration process for foreign NGOS is largely technical, and not political.
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